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Texts of the Kennedy-Khrushchev Understanding
of October 26, 27 and 28, 1962

1. From Khrushchev's secret letter of October 26.

"If assurances were given by the President and the Government of the United States that the USA itself would not participate in an attack on Cuba and would restrain others from actions of this sort, if you would recall your fleet, this would immediately change everything. I am not speaking for Fidel Castro, but I think that he and the Government of Cuba, evidently, would declare demobilization and would appeal to the people to get down to peaceful labor. Then, too, the question of armaments would disappear, since, if there is no threat, then armaments are a burden for every people. Then, too, the question of the destruction, not only of the armaments which you call offensive, but of all other armaments as well, would look different....

"Let us therefore show statesmanlike wisdom. I propose: We, for our part, will declare that our ships, bound for Cuba, will not carry any kind of armaments. You would declare that the United States will not invade Cuba with its forces and will not support any sort of forces which might intend to carry out an invasion of Cuba. Then the necessity for the presence of our military specialists in Cuba would disappear."

2. President's open letter of October 27.

"As I read your letter 1 of October 26th 7, the key elements of your proposals -- which seem generally acceptable as I understand them -- are as follows:

"1) You would agree to remove these weapons systems from Cuba under appropriate United Nations observation and supervision; and undertake, with suitable safeguards, to halt the further introduction of such weapons systems into Cuba.

"2) We, on our part, would agree -- upon the establishment of adequate arrangements through the United Nations to ensure the carrying out and continuation of these commitments -- (a) to remove promptly the quarantine measures now in effect and (b) to give assurances against an invasion of Cuba. I am confident that other nations of the Western Hemisphere would be prepared to do likewise."

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3. Khrushchev's open answer of October 28.

"In order to eliminate as rapidly as possible the conflict which endangers the cause of peace, to give an assurance to all people who crave peace, and to reassure the American people, who, I am certain, also want peace, as do the people of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Government, in addition to earlier instructions on the discontinuation of further work on weapons construction sites, has given a new order to dismantle the arms which you described as offensive, and to crate and return them to the Soviet Union....

"I regard with respect and trust the statement you made in your message of October 27, 1962, that there would be no attack, no invasion of Cuba, and not only on the part of the United States, but also on the part of other nations of the Western Hemisphere, as you said in your same message. Then the motives which induced us to render assistance of such a kind to Cuba disappear.

"It is for this reason that we instructed our officers -- these means as I had already informed you earlier are in the hands of the Soviet officers -- to take appropriate measures to discontinue construction of the aforementioned facilities, to dismantle them, and to return them to the Soviet Union. As I had informed you in the letter of October 27,* we are prepared to reach agreement to enable United Nations Representatives to verify the dismantling of these means.

"Thus in view of the assurances you have given and our instructions on dismantling, there is every condition for eliminating the present conflict."

*In Khrushchev's open letter of October 27 (the Cuba-Turkey proposal) he had said:

"I therefore make this proposal. We agree to remove from Cuba those means which you regard as offensive means. We agree to carry this out and declare this pledge in the United Nations. Your representatives will make a declaration to the effect that the United States on its part, considering the uneasiness and anxiety of the Soviet State, will remove its analogous means from Turkey.

"Let us reach agreement as to the span of time needed for you and us to achieve this. After this, persons enjoying the confidence of the U. N. Security Council might check on-the-spot fulfillment.

of the pledges assumed. Of course, the authorization of the governments of Cuba and Turkey are necessary for entry into those countries of these plenipotentiaries and for inspection of fulfillment of the pledge assumed by either side.

"It would evidently be better if these plenipotentiaries would have the trust of the Security Council and your trust and mine -- of the United States and the Soviet Union -- as well as of Turkey and Cuba. I think it will not be difficult to pick such people who would enjoy the trust and respect of all parties concerned."

4. President's open answer of October 28.

"I consider my letter to you of October twenty-seventh and your reply of today as firm undertakings on the part of both our governments which should be promptly carried out. I hope that the necessary measure can at once be taken through the United Nations, as your message says, so that the United States in turn will be able to remove the quarantine measures now in effect. I have already made arrangements to report all these matters to the Organization of American States, whose members share a deep interest in a genuine peace in the Caribbean area."